Prospects for Lebanon

An Essay on Political Opportunities and Constraints

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FOREWORD

THIS is the first in a series of papers with the general title of *Prospects for Lebanon*. Papers under this theme will focus on future scenarios, based on historical and recent political events, aimed at suggesting an acceptable outcome of the Lebanese conflict. Our purpose in opening this platform for the expression of different perceptions of the Lebanese crisis is to record the views of known intellectuals and politicians on the current situation.

We are pleased to introduce this series with Dr Nawaf Salam's *An Essay on Political Opportunities and Constraints*. Dr Salam is Lecturer at the American University of Beirut. He was formerly Visiting Scholar at the Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, and Lecturer at the Sorbonne. His doctoral dissertation was on the 1958 crisis in Lebanon, and he has published several articles and essays in various periodicals. This essay incorporates a revised version of two lectures given at the American Enterprise Institute, Washington DC, and the Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, in December 1984 and November 1986 respectively.

While the order of publication of the papers in no way reflects the relative importance of the contributions, we are grateful to Dr Salam for allowing us to start the series with his. We are making contacts for other papers in the series and will publish them more or less in the order we receive them.

We would like to emphasize that the opinions expressed in the series do not necessarily reflect views the Centre wishes to promote. It is our hope, however, that publishing this series will lead to a better understanding of the issues involved in the Lebanese crisis.

Nadim Shehadi
Director

AN ESSAY ON POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Nawaf Salam *

FOR over a decade, Lebanon has been the theatre of a cycle—or rather a spiral—of violence, the end of which is still difficult to predict. At the roots of the Lebanese ordeal stand, undoubtedly, the precariousness of the internal consensus among the various sects and the failure of the Lebanese system to accommodate, through political reforms, the underlying social and demographic changes. However, if no account is taken of the external loads bearing down on Lebanon, neither the intensity nor the course followed by the conflict can be fully grasped.

I

Partitioning Lebanon

If one is to consider the various possible outcomes of the protracted conflict in Lebanon, the first question would be: What is the feasibility of partitioning Lebanon?

The actual situation on the ground presents all the features of a *de facto* partition. These features constitute serious built-in challenges to the remaining symbols and institutions of the unitary state. The division of the country along the Christian/Muslim cleavage line has

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never been the stated policy of any of the rival Lebanese groups. But as the pattern of control exercised by the Christian 'Lebanese Front' over the districts it dominates was evolving in the direction of a 'state within a state', this pattern has come to be perceived as a series of cumulative steps aiming at partition. Through less prejudiced lenses, the Lebanese Front's policy could be interpreted as a maximization of both physical and symbolic assets, to be haggled over and used to attain an eventual federal solution for Lebanon. In other words, the independent security apparatus, the raising of taxes, and public services developed by the Lebanese Front may be interpreted as an infrastructure not specifically designed for, but which could potentially lead to, partition. Nonetheless, suspicions regarding the existence of partition plans have been sharpened by the fact that some extremist Maronite political leaders and hawkish monks have at various stages of the crisis since 1975 alluded to partition as an ultimate solution to the conflict—or have at least refused to rule it out as a possible option, thus maintaining an intended ambiguity over the issue.

Although secession cannot be considered as the fundamental aspiration of the Lebanese Christians, this choice, whenever it shows some appeal, expresses a combination of a 'never again' feeling and a profound hopelessness, rather than a realistic assessment of its political practicability.

Advocates of secession believe it has the following advantages: a Christian state will provide the needed security guarantees for the Christians; preserve their threatened distinctiveness; and, at the same time, liberate them from Muslim demographic pressure and resolve the disputed power-sharing and national identity issues.

Since 1975, support for secession has not been an element of political consensus within the Lebanese Front. It is strongly rejected by all non-Front Christian politicians, and the former Maronite Patriarch is reported to have expressed his opinion on partition in these words: 'Five years after partition (if it happens), the only people left on this mountain will be old men with white beards like me'.[1] To the Christian economic élite of entrepreneurs with business interests in the Gulf area, secession is anathema.

[1] See L. Dean Brown, *Lebanon—a mission of conciliation*. Talk given at the Middle East Institute, Washington, DC, June 22, 1976 (Mimeo p. 10).

On the domestic level, the Lebanese Muslims have repeatedly declared that they will strongly resist the implementation of any plan of partition. On the regional level, all Arab states vehemently oppose such an outcome. In addition, partition has had no international support, as it was rejected by the Western countries as well as the Soviet Union. As early as 1975, France's envoy to Lebanon, M. Couve de Murville, wrote that among the top priorities of his mission was 'to avert partition at any price'.[2] In his words, partition is 'impossible', it is 'not a real solution' but an 'absurdity', an act of 'madness'.[3] He adds: 'In 1976 it is unimaginable that a small country of 5 to 6 hundred thousand inhabitants could exist as an independent state surrounded by a Muslim sea. . . . Anyhow, the Maronites will not accept it, even though the idea has crossed some minds. They will emigrate *en masse*.'[4]

Since the outbreak of the conflict, Washington, as well, rejected partition. Its envoy to Lebanon in 1976, L. Dean Brown, declared then that it 'would lead to a small, non-viable state in an area where there are already too many'.[5] The Vatican, considering that a micro-Christian state in Lebanon would endanger the future of the 8 to 9 million Christian citizens of other Arab countries, constantly preached moderation, calling in no uncertain terms for restraint, and reaffirming on several occasions its commitment to a united Christian-Muslim Lebanon.

Let us now simulate a micro-Christian state. Because of the hostility of its surrounding Arab environment, such a micro-state could not be transformed into the dreamed-of Monaco or Switzerland. To Syria, its closest neighbour, such an outcome would be tantamount to a *casus belli*. Moreover, as Israel is likely to be its regional sponsor, there are strong reasons to believe that a micro-Christian state would be sealed off from free access to the Arab world.

Given such prospects, and if a policy of brinkmanship materializes in secession, such an outcome, instead of bringing about the desired

[2] Maurice Couve de Murville, '*La crise libanaise et l'évolution du Proche-Orient*', in *Politique Etrangère*, ii (1976), 97.

[3] Ibid., pp. 102 and 103.

[4] Ibid., p. 102.

[5] Brown, op.cit., p. 10.

security and stability, would exacerbate the existing conflicts and become a source of new wars.

II

Dismantlement

Although it is unlikely to develop as an alternative from within Lebanon, could partition still be brought about by the dismantlement of Lebanon? By dismantlement, I refer to the possibility of a partition being externally imposed, leading to the utter mutilation and dissolution of Lebanon as a political entity. This scenario is based upon the mechanical projection of the *de facto*, juxtaposed, and separate Israeli, Syrian, Phalange and Druze 'sovereignties' into *de jure* outcomes. It is also argued that such a dismantlement of Lebanon may, by granting some sort of territorial satisfaction to the main regional protagonists, defuse the explosive potential of the present situation.

However, the fact is that since 1976, Syria has been pursuing 'milieu goals'—i.e. goals pertaining to the shaping in Lebanon of political and security conditions favourable to its own interests—rather than 'possession goals'.[6] In other words, for the time being, Syria's interests in Lebanon, despite the extensive and sometimes provocative Syrian interpretation of them, could be defined as 'strategic' and 'political' as distinguished from 'territorial' and 'geographic'. Yet, with changing conditions—for instance, if the remaining institutional framework of the Lebanese state were to collapse, or if an independent Christian micro-state were to be proclaimed, or if Israel were to annex parts of southern Lebanon—it is likely that Syria's 'milieu goals' would turn into those of 'possession'. In a statement aimed partly at deterring the Maronite leadership and partly at expressing its real intentions, Damascus did not attempt to disguise its policy when it announced as early as January 7, 1976 that Syria would take over Lebanon if any further attempts were made to partition the country.[7]

[6] I borrow these two concepts from Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and collaboration: essays on international politics*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1962), pp. 73–77.

[7] See the Lebanese daily *Al-Nahar*, January 8, 1976.

Similarly, one may refer to past statements made by Zionist leaders which indicate the existence of historical Israeli claims on parts of Lebanese territory.[8] However, the question we are concerned with here is the relevance of these claims to the present formulation of Israeli priorities and policies. One may assume that had Israel's choice not been internationally constrained, it might have pursued territorial annexation.

As a matter of fact, the annexation of parts of southern Lebanon by Israel is less a military than a political issue. The variable here is whether international restraints imposed on Israeli behaviour will be maintained and whether they will remain effective deterrants.

Instead of bringing about a solution to the conflict, the dismantlement of Lebanon would most probably release destabilizing forces and generate new problems that would be far more difficult to settle.

In fact, state frontiers in this turbulent part of the world are too dangerous an issue to be handled recklessly. Redrawing Lebanon's map is likely to ignite an uncontrollable chain reaction threatening to destabilize the whole regional state system, moving forward not only to the warm shores of the Gulf but also, by gathering momentum, possibly reaching through the Sudan and Chad, as far as the famous colonial frontiers of Africa.

Furthermore, the Maronite state envisaged in such a scenario—and a Druze state in some of its versions—would encourage the secessionist trends of other minority groups spread throughout the Middle East.

III

The Status Quo Ante

Taking into account the costs and risks implied in the partitioning models and given that the main stream within all Lebanese sects

[8] See the Zionist Organization Memorandum to the Peace Conference held in Versailles in 1919 in J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East 1914–1956*, II (Princeton 1956), 50–54. Also see in the Israeli daily, *Davar*, of October 29, 1971 the exchange of letters in 1954 between the three Israeli leaders, David Ben Gurion, Moshe Sharett and Eliahu Sasson.

clearly prefers a reunited and independent Lebanon to both the sectarian mini-state options or to annexation by either of Lebanon's neighbours, let us now consider the possibility of a return to the status quo ante, to the Lebanon of the 1943 agreement. Is such a '*restauration*' a feasible alternative?

During the first stages of the conflict (1975–76), the Maronite leadership's aim was to defend the then-challenged political formula established by the 1943 agreement. Although it was tactically on the offensive, the leadership's strategy was a defensive one, a sort of rearguard action to block change and maintain the status quo.

In the light of the course taken by the war, the Lebanese Front abandoned its attachment to the strict maintenance of the 1943 formula, and gradually shifted towards considering a federal solution for Lebanon. The point is, however, that the preservation of the 1943 equation had once been the main objective of one of the major Lebanese factions. Even though the return to the 1943 formula is no longer the declared aim of any of the political groups, that status quo ante is still referred to with a great deal of nostalgia by many different types of Lebanese: political notables whose power has been eroded, certain old bourgeois circles hoping to regain their past *dolce vita*, and grievously affected people in search of normalcy. All of them, in one way or another, refer positively to the days of the 1943 formula, perceived as a framework of law and stability, as opposed to the chaos and violence of the civil war.

Beyond these manifestations of nostalgia, the 1943 formula is defended implicitly in frequently presented arguments claiming that the breakdown of the system was not due to intrinsic insufficiencies but to external pressures exerted upon it. But the fact is that under no condition is a return to the *ancien régime* possible.

Firstly, given the high expectations of all major Lebanese parties, this is both an unacceptable outcome and an impractical solution.

Secondly, the 1943 formula is too rigid, and has failed to accommodate the rapid social, economic and especially demographic changes of the 1960s and 1970s, in addition to the new realities brought about by war. Established in 1943 on the basis of a 1932 census, the old system sought to guarantee proportional representation for all factions and to provide, at the time, for Maronite Christian prominence. Now, however, it is being challenged by the

Muslims who have come to outnumber the Christians and who have aimed at translating their demographic weight into fairer representation, a more equitable distribution of wealth, and a greater power in the decision-making process.

Thirdly, the imbalances of the 1943 formula have been a main cause of the Lebanese system's vulnerability to external pressures.

Despite the fact that the 1943 formula has become outdated, the very premise of the 1943 agreement—the necessity for an Islamic-Christian accord and the idea of Lebanon as an independent unitary state—has, nonetheless, come to express Lebanon's *raison d'être*. This is the 1943 covenant (*al-mithāq*) to be distinguished from the 1943 formula (*al-sīgha*).

The only remaining function of the 1943 formula is to preserve the country from total collapse through the idea of constitutional continuity. But if Lebanon is to be created anew, one cannot breathe life into such an obsolete framework. Considering alternatives to the 1943 formula is, therefore, justified. We shall examine, first, the federal model and, next, the model of secularism.

IV

On Federalism

Although on several occasions the Lebanese Front has advocated political decentralization and territorial federalism, it was not until the second Lebanese National Dialogue Conference held on March 19, 1984 in Lausanne that it published—as a Front—an articulated and detailed project in that direction. Furthermore, the Lebanese Front's Lausanne paper calling for the creation of 'The Federal Republic of Lebanon' was written in very broad and general terms.[9] However, since 1976, elaborate federal blueprints have been put out by former President Camille Chamoun, as well as by other Front members, and the Lebanese Forces have on several occasions defended federal ideas and advocated security and political decentralization.

The cornerstone of all the federal proposals, despite their differences, is the theme of the Christian need for geographical

[9] For the full text see Georges Bashir, Philip Abi Akl and Fawzi Mubarak ed., *Umarā' al-ṭawā'if* (Beirut 1983), pp. 343–45.

guarantees. But if any workable new formula is to be accepted by *all* Lebanese factions, federalism cannot be the basis of such a consensus. In fact, the main trend within the Muslim leadership not only rejects federalism, but considers it a disguised form of partition which, therefore, has to be as strongly opposed as secession itself. In addition, no other Christian group besides the Lebanese Front has called for a federal solution. From a pragmatic standpoint, the viability and costs of territorial federalism are as follows. Federalism might have been a feasible solution for the Lebanese crisis had the contending religious sects been territorially isolated or, at least, concentrated in sufficiently large geographical areas. This is not the case in Lebanon where, despite all the forced movements of population which have occurred since 1975, perhaps as many as half of the Christian population still lives outside the enclave dominated by the Lebanese Forces.[10] It is the Lebanese Front-controlled area and one Druze zone which are confessionally exclusive, but the various Lebanese religious sects are not territorially grouped. Most of Lebanon's regions, though in varying proportions, are still in fact mixed populations.

Furthermore, since canton—or province—boundaries cannot be drawn without including large numbers of people belonging to sects whose supposed territorial base is elsewhere, federalism will permit the preponderant sect in any one canton to negate the demands of the minority sect. To perform as radical and comprehensive a solution as it is vaunted to be, federalism would entail new population exchanges and cause great human suffering. Christians and Muslims alike, unwilling to join the canton which is supposed to be theirs, will risk discrimination if they stay put.

The question of canton boundaries and the fate of the mixed, thereby contested, areas are very likely to become a source of new conflicts and may generate new cycles of violence.

Finally, a federal formula is no solution to the national identity problem in Lebanon as it may appear to be. In fact, the issue of national identity is directly related to the question of foreign and defence policies, which will continue to be handled by the central Government, whether federal or not.

[10] In regions like the Bekaa, northern and southern Lebanon and towns like Zahleh, Jezzine, Zghorta, Bisharri, Tripoli and West Beirut.

In addition, one is justified in fearing the centrifugal and disintegrative dangers of federalism, for it may provide further stimuli to the separatist forces. On balance, federalism is more of a solution to the vested interests of certain militias brought about in the wake of the civil war rather than to the geo-sectarian make-up of Lebanon.

V

On Secularism

Diametrically opposed to the federal solution is the proposal to secularize the political system as an alternative to the 1943 formula. During the 1975–76 phase of the war, 'the establishment of a secular state' was the motto of Kamal Jumblatt and the National Movement. Its platform, published in the summer of 1975, called for the abolition of political confessionalism in the executive, legislative and military branches. It proposed an electoral law declaring Lebanon a single electoral constituency and the adoption of non-sectarian proportional representation.[11]

On several occasions, in particular at the Geneva and Lausanne National Dialogue Conferences, the Sunni, Druze and more particularly, the Shi'i leaders also emphasized the idea of abrogating political confessionalism and vehemently attacked the maintenance of Maronite privileges.

However, since the idea of secularizing the State does not acknowledge the political interests of the different sects acting as distinct communal groups, it is more likely under the prevailing conditions to stimulate the self-defence mechanisms of the various groups and lead to *sectarian* cohesion, rather than to *national* integration. It will, therefore, increase the political aggressiveness of minorities and, instead of regulating communal conflicts, it will more likely intensify them.

Moreover, secularization and its appeal to the rule of demographic realities has been perceived by the Maronites as an attempt to establish Muslim majority rule, to drive them out from positions guaranteed under the 1943 formula and reduce them to a new sort of *dhimmi*—the status of non-Muslims under Islamic state rule—living

[11] Bashir *et al.*, op.cit., pp. 273–77.

on Muslim-Arab tolerance. In addition, the advent of the Iranian revolution and its Lebanese fall-out, along with Muslim revivalism in Arab lands and the Lebanese Christians' own misadventures with, first, their Syrian and, later, Israeli allies, aggravated the Christian trauma.

Theoretically, secularism ensures justice and equal opportunities for all citizens. However, it requires that the norm of social and political individualism prevail over sectarian identification and affiliation. Its other prerequisite is that a national—as opposed to segmental—identity succeeds in replacing confessional loyalties. This is a question of deep cultural and social transformation, a matter of generations to come, especially since sectarian allegiances have been reinforced during the past years of war.

VI

A New Deal

If federalism, secularism and the return to the 1943 formula are all impracticable alternatives for rebuilding Lebanon, what then could be the basis for a 'New Deal'? It is obvious that there is no magic recipe or blueprint, and that the new formula will be the outcome of a nation-wide Lebanese dialogue. We shall, therefore, restrict our remarks to some guiding principles.

To be mutually acceptable, the new formula should be a mutually advantageous one. In other words, it must be capable of offering political benefits to all major parties at the same time. This is of utmost importance, for only an outcome of positive gain for each major faction can motivate the Lebanese protagonists to abandon the language of arms and strike a 'New Deal' among themselves.

Therefore, in order to respond to all major parties' needs, the resources and rewards of the political system ought to be increased. New institutions must be created such as a Constitutional High Court and a Socio-Economic Council.

While fractionating issues appears to be a common-sense recipe for avoiding deadlock in conflict resolution, past experience in Lebanon has shown that since all parties cannot be satisfied on all issues, workable formulas must be comprehensive and presented as package deals. The 1976 Constitutional Document, based on the idea of

balance and reciprocity, constituted an attempt in that direction.[12] It has, however, become outdated, because new issues emerging in the wake of the war have generated new demands. Nevertheless, its principle of equilibrium and equity offers a solid basis that should be built upon.

Moreover, no stability can be expected from any formula that will leave the Muslim majority in the status of a politically permanent minority. Consequently, Muslim grievances of being the 'have-nots' of the system should be redressed. Likewise, no formula can be expected to win the endorsement of the Christians if it does not provide them with political guarantees. Therefore, the new formula should address the Christians' fear of being swallowed up, either by unfavourable internal demographic changes or by Lebanon's Muslim-Arab environment.

Lastly, on the national identity issue, compromise formulations of 'why' and 'how' Lebanon belongs to the Arab world were reached at the Geneva conference and have been endorsed by the Karami Government of 'National Union'.[13] Still, the loyalty to Lebanon—if not as a nation by itself, then as a *patria*—will have to be consolidated. In view of the prevailing trends elsewhere in the Arab world, this is not exclusive to the Arab identity of the Lebanese.

Regarding the package, its main elements would be according to the following scheme.

On a temporary basis, the religious groups would be maintained as constituent political units of the system. Such a framework, however, will continue to alienate the individual citizen's right to equality. Therefore, sectarianism should be abolished at all levels of bureaucracy. Open access to the bureaucracy, with competition based on merit, will help produce both justice among aspirants and efficient governmental services. In addition, this may reduce corruption, nepotism and favouritism in the state apparatus. Likewise, sectarian representation

[12] Editor's note: For details of the 1976 Constitutional Document, see *Arab Report and Record 1–14 February*, III (1976), 78.

[13] Editor's note: A summary of these formulations can be found in Wadi D. Haddad, *Lebanon: the politics of revolving doors*, The Washington Papers 114 (New York 1985), pp. 111–12.

could at a later stage be limited to a senate while elections to Parliament would be held on proportional non-sectarian basis.

Beyond demographic realities, the principle of parity between Muslims and Christians in Parliament must be endorsed, and powers within the executive ought to be constitutionally redefined so that a collegiate form of government may be established.

The political scene should also be widened. In addition to the creation of new institutions, no less important would be an increase in the size of the Parliament in order to maximize political opportunities. This would make room, within the formal channels of political expression, for the emerging new élites. Lowering the voting age would also help expand political participation in a young society whose youth has become highly politicized.

The principle of decentralization must be adopted and the present number of governorates increased. New laws should provide for the creation of elected provincial councils in order to ensure local participation in decision making. Decentralization will, thus, help preserve the identity of individual regions without having to risk the dangers of federation. In addition, with the new jobs it creates, the decentralization policy may be capable of absorbing a substantial percentage of the militiamen.

Whereas the 1943 formula suffered from its own sectarian strait-jacket, the 'New Deal', in spite of its sectarian basis and features, should be flexible and open to the future abolition of sectarianism in the Lebanese political system. It has been argued that secularism requires deep social and cultural transformation; therefore, the change will have to be gradual and the 'New Deal' must be capable of accommodating such a process, for only a secular state can ensure justice and equal opportunities for all citizens.

In short, the 1943 formula has locked Lebanon into a static political system which has become obsolete. It has also preserved the leadership of archaic and quasi-feudal notables. In contrast, the 'New Deal' should remain dynamic and help the development of modern political parties.

Still, if the social obligations of the State and its responsibilities for development are not clearly defined in a new policy that addresses the present social and economic imbalances, and without a radical administrative reform capable of restoring confidence in

the public sector and the state apparatus in general, Lebanon will not be rebuilt.

Yet, Lebanon cannot be rebuilt without regard for the concerns of its immediate environment. In fact, one has still to consider that the major regional protagonists are in a position to impede the path to a genuine Lebanese national *entente* and block any solution which does not satisfy their demands. In addition, the rival Lebanese sect leaders and warlords, despite their proverbial cunning and astuteness, have overplayed their foreign sponsorship to the extent of virtually becoming its hostages, thus compromising their own freedom of action and decision making.

In seeking a way out of its ordeal, Lebanon cannot fully disengage itself from the Middle East conflict. Hence, redressing Lebanon's relationships with its immediate environment becomes closely interlinked with achieving national *entente*. For both analytical and practical purposes, Lebanese-Israeli, Lebanese-Syrian and Lebanese-Palestinian relations must be distinguished.

VII

Lebanon and Israel

The main external challenge that Lebanon faces is the continued Israeli occupation of parts of its territory and the military operations which Israel conducts there, thus threatening both its integrity and sovereignty.

Israel has been a major actor throughout the Lebanese crisis. Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian relations, in addition to Israel's policies towards the Lebanese contending parties, have affected to a great extent the course of events in Lebanon during the past decade. However, we shall focus here on how Lebanese-Israeli relations can be regulated.

Israel's demands on Lebanon, in the aftermath of its 1982 invasion, have been too high to be met. Although, in early 1983, the Israeli Government did scale down Ariel Sharon's original objectives, Israel's demands remained too ambitious and the May 17 accord turned out to be too costly a price for Lebanon, which had to abrogate it. Not only did the May 17 accord violate Lebanon's sovereignty and jeopardize its vital Arab relations but, more

importantly, it broke the fragile Lebanese national consensus which was then emerging.

In fact, the normalization of relations which includes the cross-border flow of people and goods cannot be handled on a bilateral, Lebanese-Israeli basis, as stipulated by the May 17 accord. It is a major political issue which must await the global settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Attempts at turning south Lebanon into a satellite state through proxy occupation carried out by Israeli surrogates in the so-called 'Security Belt' can be no viable alternative to the abrogation of the May 17 accord. The presence of Israeli-sponsored militias in the South is not only a perpetual challenge to the prospects of restoring Lebanese sovereignty there, but is in itself the source of a continued cycle of violence, including operations across the border by the most radical Lebanese groups.

Occupation, which entails systematic repression, breeds resistance. Punitive campaigns, search raids, and economic sanctions which are applied to non-co-operating villages have simply increased the feelings of frustration and augmented the ranks of the Lebanese National Resistance. In this respect, betting on Shi'i readiness to collaborate with the Israeli forces has turned out to be a mere illusion. This bet was based on a policy of wishful thinking which had taken the alienation of the Shi'i of the South from the Palestinians as a would-be motive for establishing close ties of co-operation with Israel. The degree of Israel's miscalculation is well illustrated by its two-fold failure: to establish local collaborative structures in the form of militias in Shi'i villages on the one hand, and to undercut Amal's influence, on the other hand, by sponsoring the return of some Shi'i traditional notables whose once-enjoyed power had withered away long before the occupation.

However, Israel still seems to consider that, by maintaining an 'off-balance Lebanon' through its protégés in the border strip, it remains in a position capable of affecting the political future of Lebanon. Contrary to the open-ended situation created by Israel's proxies, implementing the mandate of the United Nations forces present in south Lebanon (UNIFIL) appears as a credible means of defusing tensions, leading to the sealing-off of the Lebanese frontiers with Israel. In other words, while proxy occupation is essentially a

destabilizing factor, the importance of UNIFIL lies in its potential role as an instrument of peace and security.

But the fact is that UNIFIL was never allowed to carry out its mandate as defined by Security Council Resolution 425, which 'calls upon Israel immediately to cease its military action against Lebanese territorial integrity and withdraw forthwith its forces from all Lebanese territory'. UNIFIL is said to be established 'for the purpose of confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restoring international peace and security and assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its Effective Authority in the area.'[14]

Alleging that UNIFIL was incapable of protecting Northern Galilee, Israel obstructed the former's task by retaining a zone of *de facto* occupation through the local militias it had created. Moreover, Israel claimed for itself the right to strike at any position north of the so-called 'Security Zone' in the UNIFIL area of operation and even beyond. Here a paradox arises: UNIFIL is at the same time judged ineffective and is deliberately prevented by Israel from deploying and operating throughout the area assigned to it by the Security Council. Hence, the question: Does such an inhibited UNIFIL still offer opportunities worth considering?

Firstly, there is no better answer to UNIFIL's presumed ineffectiveness than to allow its deployment down to the international border.

Secondly, UNIFIL's role could be redefined in the direction of giving it the now-lacking dynamic deterrent capability it needs to carry out its mandate successfully.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the very significance of the presence of UN forces in south Lebanon lies in its representation of an international consensus which has recently been enhanced by a supportive Soviet attitude towards UNIFIL. Here, the implemention process of UNIFIL's mandate will greatly depend on whether the United States shows enough leadership in bringing Israel, through the leverage it supposedly has over her, to comply with Security Council Resolution 425; a resolution which was not only sponsored by Washington, but also authored by its Ambassador to the UN.

[14] For the full text see Ghassan Tueni ed., *Peace-Keeping Lebanon* (New York, 1979), p. 19.

In short, Lebanon cannot offer Israel political gains in exchange for the withdrawal of its troops. However, pending a 'comprehensive peace' in the Middle East, a 'Zone of Peace' could be established in southern Lebanon through UN forces and with substantial international, mainly US, support.

VIII

Lebanon and Syria

Syria's interests in Lebanon—what it calls its 'vital' interests in Lebanon—are multiple, and cannot be ignored or bypassed. From a Syrian perspective, and irrespective of who governs in Damascus, their legitimacy is claimed on the basis of history and geography. Two levels can be discerned here.

Syria's general policy in Lebanon should be read as part of its regional efforts to redress the Arab-Israeli balance of power upset by the Sinai II agreement of September 1975 and later by Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the Camp David agreement. Here, Syria sought to enhance its regional position *vis-à-vis* the US by moving closer to Moscow on the one hand and through its exercise of influence over Lebanon and its attempts to control PLO activities and institutions on the other hand.

Syria has also been militarily concerned with what it considers its soft and vulnerable Lebanese flank. It fears an Israeli thrust across the Lebanese Bekaa valley towards either its northern city triangle of Homs-Hama-Aleppo or Damascus itself.

It is against this background that Syria's opposition to the US-brokered May 17, 1983 accord between Lebanon and Israel is to be understood. In fact, the Reagan Peace Plan of September 1, 1982 ignored any Syrian interest or role in the settlement of the Middle East conflict. It mentioned neither the occupied Golan Heights, formally annexed by Israel in 1981, nor Syria. Moreover, the May 17 accord which was, from a certain US perspective, considered as the 'first step' in the process of implementing the Reagan Plan, was negotiated without serious consultations with Damascus from both Washington and Beirut at that time. Syria perceived the conclusion of the May 17 accord as a separate peace agreement similar to Camp David in that it constituted a violation of the principle of Arab Solidarity and a

weakening of the negotiating position of individual Arab states. Hence, Syria viewed the accord as an attempt to isolate it and to exclude it from the mainstream of regional diplomacy. In addition, several of the clauses of the May 17 accord were considered as a direct threat to Syria's strategic and security interests in Lebanon. Placed under a combination of internal and Syrian pressures, President Gemayel first postponed its ratification, then abrogated it.

Taking into account such concerns, as in the aftermath of the 1958 crisis, former Lebanese President, Fuad Shihab, opted for a policy of *détente* with Nasser; today, a rebuilt Lebanon must follow a policy of *entente* with Syria—especially and most importantly—on both the regional diplomacy and security levels. Here, several arrangements for further co-ordination are possible: alternative frameworks for security co-operation and complementarity, regular consultations on regional and foreign policy issues, and so forth.

In short, the heart of the question is the following: rebuilding Lebanon on anti-Syrian terms is an impossible task and a rebuilt Lebanon opting for an anti-Syrian policy becomes a vulnerable Lebanon. A stable Lebanon is a Lebanon responsive to Syria's main regional and foreign policy concerns. These are constraints of history and geography; to ignore them puts Lebanon's internal order and regional security in jeopardy.

IX

Lebanon and the Palestinians

Yet another major environmental challenge that Lebanon has to address is the Palestinian dimension of the conflict. A main factor that led to the 1975 outbreak was the contradiction between the *raison d'état* of Lebanon and the *raison de revolution* of the PLO; two irreconcilable logics. In fact, the autonomy, i.e. extra-territoriality and other privileges, enjoyed by the Palestinians was a central issue in the 1975–76 conflict, and the question of the legitimacy and control of *fedayeen* activity, in and from Lebanon, remained an unresolved problem between 1976 and 1982.

The 1982 Israeli invasion, labelled 'Peace for Galilee', drove the bulk of the Palestinian guerrillas out of southern Lebanon and Beirut. To a great extent, it destroyed the infrastructure of the 'state within a

state' which the PLO had formed in Lebanon. Yet, since no progress has been made in solving the Palestinian problem, Palestinian arms were bound to resurface among the exiled Palestinians living in Lebanon. It may also be useful here to recall that over 300,000 civilian Palestinians, most of whom inhabit refugee camps, did remain in Lebanon.

Since 1948, and especially during the past decade, several plans for the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict have suggested the resettlement of these refugees on a permanent basis in Lebanon. Such assimilation projects have been Israel's stated goal and constant policy. However, resettlement plans, or *tawtīn* as they are called in Arabic, have been strongly opposed by the Palestinian leadership which rejects all projects based on the absorption or assimilation of the refugees in host Arab countries.

In addition, such plans simply do not take into account the fact that the Palestinians have succeeded in maintaining and nourishing their social distinctiveness, and sometimes even in exaggerating their subcultural differences (food, accent, dress, etc.) from other Arabs in order to preserve their identity. Their Palestinian 'national' consciousness has been developed to its maximum by their present leadership.[15]

Diametrically opposed to the *tawtīn* option, only a Palestinian 'political entity' on the West Bank and in Gaza can bring about the conditions for a lasting and comprehensive solution to the problems generated by the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. If such a 'homeland' were to be established, even though it would fall short of absorbing all the Palestinians now in Lebanon, its impact on their future status would nonetheless be of utmost importance. The Palestinians remaining in Lebanon would have a similar status to that of other Arab citizens living in Lebanon as non-Lebanese Arab residents. They will have no special advantages or privileges, no political prerogatives or extra-territorial status. From a socio-psychological perspective, as individuals then holding a Palestinian passport, they would gradually overcome the frustrations of their previous homelessness. As a group, they will no

[15] See Rosemary Sayigh, 'The Palestinian experience: integration and non-integration in the Arab *Ghorba*', in *Arab Studies Quarterly*, i/ii, 96–112.

longer be a potential challenge either to Lebanon's internal equilibrium or to its security.

At the macro level, a Palestinian political entity, were it to be embodied in some kind of a mini-state form, will help stabilize the whole region. Paradoxically, and to a certain extent ironically, the Palestinian demands that have been for over 30 years *the* catalyst and the main rallying point for pan-Arabism—once satisfied by the creation of a Palestinian 'homeland' in a mini-state form, and most probably linked to Jordan—would enhance the legitimacy of other independent, separate and sovereign state units on the present political map of the region.[16]

A Palestinian state is the radical and lasting solution to the problems generated by the Palestinian presence in Lebanon; but, until such a state materializes and for the sake of ensuring stability for Lebanon and order within its boundaries, Lebanese-Palestinian relations will have to be regulated. Since the trauma of the Sabra and Chatila camp massacres of September 1982, Palestinians have been living in a state of constant anxiety, increased at first by arbitrary arrests conducted by the Lebanese army and discriminatory measures undertaken by the *Sureté Générale* in 1982–83, and later by the harassments of the Shi'i armed militia. Instead of harassing the Palestinians, the Lebanese should ensure their security. Indeed, no extra-territorial status and *port d'armes* privileges as in pre-1982 will be given any longer to the Palestinians. However, their safety as a group as well as their basic individual rights ought to be guaranteed by the Lebanese state.

X

A solution for the Lebanese crisis, it has been argued here, depends on achieving a Lebanese national *entente* and redressing Lebanon's relations with its environment. Such a task requires not only political engineering skills but a great deal of wisdom as well.

Will such wisdom come through suffering, as the Greek poet Aeschylus the son of Euphorion thought some thousands of years ago?

[16] See Walid Khalidi, 'Thinking the unthinkable: a sovereign Palestinian State', in *Foreign Affairs*, v/iv, 698 and 699.